

immediately be brought to the attention of the appropriate Customs Service field office.

(3) *Disclosure of ruling letters.* The ruling letter shall be based on the information set forth in the ruling request. No part of the ruling letter, including names, addresses, or information relating to the business transactions of private parties, shall be deemed to constitute privileged or confidential commercial or financial information or trade secrets exempt from disclosure pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act, as amended (5 U.S.C. 552), unless, as provided in §177.2(b)(7), the information claimed to be exempt from disclosure is clearly identified and the reasons for the exemption are set forth. Before the issuance of the ruling letter, the person submitting the ruling request, will be notified of any decision adverse to his claim for exemption from disclosure and will, upon written request to Customs within 10 working days of the date of notification, be permitted to withdraw the ruling request. All ruling letters issued by the Customs Service will be available, upon written request, for inspection and copying by any person (with any portions determined to be exempt from disclosure deleted).

(b) *Other rulings.* The Headquarters Office may from time to time issue other rulings with respect to issues or transactions described or suggested by requests for rulings submitted under the provisions of this part, or with respect to issues or transactions otherwise brought to its attention. These rulings, which are statements of the official position of the Customs Service which are likely to be of widespread interest and application, are published in the Customs Bulletin, as described in §177.10.

[T.D. 75-186, 40 FR 31929, July 30, 1975, as amended by T.D. 80-285, 45 FR 80105, Dec. 3, 1980; T.D. 84-149, 49 FR 28699, July 16, 1984; T.D. 89-74, 54 FR 31516, July 31, 1989]

§ 177.9 Effect of ruling letters.

(a) *Effect of ruling letters generally.* A ruling letter issued by the Customs Service under the provisions of this part represents the official position of the Customs Service with respect to the particular transaction or issue de-

scribed therein and is binding on all Customs Service personnel in accordance with the provisions of this section until modified or revoked. In the absence of a change of practice or other modification or revocation which affects the principle of the ruling set forth in the ruling letter, that principle may be cited as authority in the disposition of transactions involving the same circumstances. Generally, a ruling letter is effective on the date it is issued and may be applied to all entries which are unliquidated, or other transactions with respect to which the Customs Service has not taken final action on that date. See, however, §177.10(e) (changes of practice published in the FEDERAL REGISTER) and §177.12 (rulings which modify or revoke previous rulings, decisions, or treatments).

(b) *Application of rulings to transactions—(1) Generally.* Each ruling letter is issued on the assumption that all of the information furnished in connection with the ruling request and incorporated in the ruling letter, either directly, by reference, or by implication, is accurate and complete in every material respect. The application of a ruling letter by a Customs Service field office to the transaction to which it is purported to relate is subject to the verification of the facts incorporated in the ruling letter, a comparison of the transaction described therein to the actual transaction, and the satisfaction of any conditions on which the ruling was based. If, in the opinion of any Customs Service field office by whom the transaction is under consideration or review, the ruling letter should be modified or revoked, the findings and recommendations of that office will be forwarded to the Headquarters Office for consideration, as provided in §177.11(b)(1)(i), prior to any final disposition with respect to the transaction by that office. Otherwise, if the transaction described in the ruling letter and the actual transaction are the same, and any and all conditions set forth in the ruling letter have been satisfied, the ruling will be applied to the transaction.

(2) *Tariff classification rulings.* Each ruling letter setting forth the proper classification of an article under the

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provisions of the Harmonized Tariff Schedule of the United States will be applied only with respect to transactions involving articles identical to the sample submitted with the ruling request or to articles whose description is identical to the description set forth in the ruling letter.

(3) *Valuation rulings.* Each ruling letter setting forth the proper valuation of an article under the provisions of section 402 of the Tariff Act of 1930, as amended (19 U.S.C. 1401a), will be applied only with respect to transactions involving the same merchandise and like facts.

(4) *Carrier rulings.* Each ruling letter setting forth the applicability of the navigation laws to a vessel will be applied only with respect to transactions involving operations identical to those set forth in the ruling letter. Each ruling letter setting forth a determination as to whether or not the primary object of a contemplated voyage is coastwise transportation in violation of 46 U.S.C. 289 will be binding on the United States Customs Service with respect to any transaction identical to the facts and circumstances described in the ruling request and undertaken in reliance on the ruling letter.

(c) *Reliance on ruling letters by others.* Except when public notice and comment procedures apply under § 177.12, a ruling letter is subject to modification or revocation by CBP without notice to any person other than the person to whom the ruling letter was addressed. Accordingly, no other person should rely on the ruling letter or assume that the principles of that ruling will be applied in connection with any transaction other than the one described in the letter. However, any person eligible to request a ruling under § 177.1(c) may request information as to whether a previously-issued ruling letter has been modified or revoked by writing the Commissioner of Customs and Border Protection, Attention: Regulations and Rulings, Office of International Trade, Washington, DC 20229, and either enclosing a copy of the ruling letter or furnishing other information sufficient to permit the ruling letter in question to be identified.

(d)–(e) [Reserved]

[T.D. 75–186, 40 FR 31929, July 30, 1975, as amended by T.D. 80–285, 45 FR 80105, Dec. 3, 1980; T.D. 84–149, 49 FR 28699, July 16, 1984; T.D. 87–89, 52 FR 24446, July 1, 1987; T.D. 89–1, 53 FR 51271, Dec. 21, 1988; T.D. 89–74, 54 FR 31516, July 31, 1989; T.D. 02–49, 67 FR 53496, Aug. 16, 2002]

§ 177.10 Publication of decisions.

(a) *Generally.* Within 90 days after issuing any interpretive decision under the Tariff Act of 1930, as amended, relating to any Customs transaction (prospective, current, or completed), the Customs Service shall publish the decision in the Customs Bulletin or otherwise make it available for public inspection. For purposes of this paragraph an interpretive decision includes any ruling letter, internal advice memorandum, or protest review decision. Disclosure is governed by 31 CFR part 1, 19 CFR part 103, and 19 CFR 177.8(a)(3).

(b) [Reserved]

(c) *Changes of practice.* Before the publication of a ruling which has the effect of changing an established and uniform practice and which results in the assessment of a higher rate of duty within the meaning of 19 U.S.C. 1315(d), notice that the practice (or prior ruling on which that practice was based) is under review will be published in the FEDERAL REGISTER and interested parties will be given an opportunity to make written submissions with respect to the correctness of the contemplated change.

(d) *Limiting rulings.* A published ruling may limit the application of a court decision to the specific article under litigation, or to an article of a specific class or kind of such merchandise, or to the particular circumstances or entries which were the subject of the litigation.

(e) *Effective dates.* Except as otherwise provided in § 177.12(e) or in the ruling itself, all rulings published under the provisions of this part will be applied immediately. If the ruling involves merchandise, it will be applicable to all unliquidated entries, except that a change of practice resulting in the assessment of a higher rate of duty or increased duties shall be effective